

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 ACDA-07 USIE-00 NSCE-00
SSO-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 TRSE-00
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-----061641 051618Z /40

O 051500Z OCT 77
FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2702

C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 6732

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, SOPN, YO, US
SUBJECT: U.S. PRESS STORIES ON US-YUGOSLAV MILITARY TIES

1. ON EVE OF SECDEF'S VISIT, OCT 4 WALL STREET JOURNAL ARTICLE QUOTING STATE DEPT OFFICIAL THAT U.S. "PLAYING AT MARGINS IN YUGOSLAVIA", PENTAGON OFFICIALS THAT SENDING USN SHIPS TO YUGOSLAV YARDS AND OTHER STEPS DESIGNED TO COUNTER SOVIETS HERE PLUS OCT 4 WASHINGTON STAR PIECE ON TANK DIVERSION CASTS LARGE CLOUD OVER AND MAY SERIOUSLY COMPLICATE DR. BROWN'S TALKS WITH GEN. LJUBICIC. IN EFFORT MINIMIZE DAMAGE BY GETTING THERE FIRST WITH OUR VIEWS, POLCOUNS DELIVERED ARTICLES TOGETHER WITH SECDEF'S PRESS CONFERENCE TO FSFA ACTING DIRECTOR NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS CRNJAK OCT 5TH. POLCOUNS STRESSED THAT ONLY PRESS CONFERENCE COMMENTS BY SECDEF ARE OFFICIAL POLICY, EXPRESSED OUR OUTRAGE OVER ARTICLES, SAID COMMENTS MADE IN WALL STREET JOURNAL PIECE DID NOT REFLECT SERIOUSNESS OF SECDEF'S MISSION AND OUR OVERALL DESIRE FOR MILITARY COOPERATION, AND REQUESTED THAT GOY WAIT UNTIL SECDEF VISIT BEFORE DRAWING ANY CONCLUSIONS. WE POINTED OUT THAT INVITATION FOR MARK 44 TEAM DELIVERED THIS MORNING PROVES OUR SINCERE DESIRE TO MOVE AHEAD AND THAT THEREFORE "WASHINGTON STAR" LEAK ON TANKS NOT ATTEMPT PUT PRESSURE ON GOY. CRNJAK MADE NO COMMENT AS HAD NOT READ ARTICLES. HE EXPRESSED GENERAL REGRETS
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THAT THEY APPEARED JUST BEFORE BISIT, AND SAID HE WOULD DELIVER PRESS CONFERENCE AND ARTICLES TOGETHER WITH OUR EXPLANATION TO DEFENSE SECRETARIAT IMMEDIATELY. HE NOTED THAT REGULAR FSFA THURSDAY PRESS CONFERENCE HAD BEEN POSTPONED TO MONDAY, OCT 10TH. GOY ANNOUNCEMENT OF SECDEF VISIT WOULD BE MADE THEN. HE DID NOT SAY, BUT IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT YUGOSLAVS WILL FEEL COMPELLED AT THAT TIME TO REACT IN

SOME WAY TO THESE ARTICLES.

2. EMBASSY NEEDS GUIDANCE ON HOW TO HANDLE INEVITABLE PRESS
QUERIES ABOUT RANGE OF ISSUES RAISED IN ARTICLES ON TANK DIVERSION
WE RECOMMEND CONFIRMING THAT IT OCCURRED, NOTING BOTH
GOVERNMENTS HAD EXPRESSED REGRETS AND THAT WE HAD WORKED
OUT PROCEDURES SO THAT IT WOULD NOT HAPPEN AGAIN. WE WOULD
REFER TO WASHINGTON ANY REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ABOUT
PROCEDURES AND TALKS. PLEASE LET QT KNOW IF THIS LINE
ACCEPTABLE. ON WALL STREET JOURNAL PIECE, WE ARE MERELY
NOTING THAT IN 1950'S U.S. HAD MAJOR MILITARY COOPERATION
RELATIONSHIP WITH YUGOSLAVIA, OVER LAST FIFTEEN YEARS
THIS HAS DROPPED OFF TO VERY LITTLE AND THAT SECDEF
COMING HERE TO DISCUSS NATURE OF FUTURE RELATIONSHIP.
WE AVOIDING ANY CHARACTERIZATION OF POSSIBLE NATURE OF
THAT RELATIONSHIP.

3. WE CANNOT PREDICT EXTENT OF DAMAGE THESE ARTICLES
WILL DO. BUT IT CERTAIN THAT TITO, LJUBICIC AND OTHERS
WILL SEE THEM AS CASTING FURTHER DOUBT UPON OUR BONA
FIDES. SECDEF'S VISIT IS MADE JUST THAT MUCH MORE
DIFFICULT--AND IMPORTANT. AS WE HAVE REPEATEDLY
STRESSED, STATE AND DEFENSE OFFICIALS SHOULD BE MADE
AWARE THAT THEIR IDLE COMMENTS TO NEWSMEN ON THIS VERY
SENSITIVE (FOR GOY) SUBJECT ARE SERIOUSLY UNDERMINING
FUNDAMENTAL AMERICAN INTEREST IN CLOSER COOPERATION WITH
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YUGOSLAVIA.

WORTZEL

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
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Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 05-Oct-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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